

Rostand's Bitter Poetical Assault Upon Gas Warfare

The Famous French Poet's Satirical Verses That Have Aroused So Much Comment Abroad---And Some Personal Experiences of Soldiers with the Deadly Fumes

The Charge of the Gases—By Edmond Rostand

OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY.

From the Original French, Done Into English Verse by Curtis Dunham

THE Orderly, areek with pride,
Approached his Lord of War,
Saluted with a gesture wide
And said: "My Emperor,

"The Yellow Vapors of the Guard—
Ignoring Judge and Jury—
Well have played the Poison Card
Of a Teutonic Fury!

"Superb the charge the Vapors
made;
An avalanche of Gases
Held the choking foe dismayed,
And throttled them in masses.

"A squadron of Miasmas rode
Ahead as suffocators—
Sire, our humane Teuton mode
Delighted the spectators.

"Who led the valiant Gases, Sire?
'Twas Captain Anhydride;
Bold Arsenic was there for hire,
And frightful Cyanide.

"So, scattering their Poisons wide,
These Knights (not of the Rose)
Descended on the dazed Allied—
And had them by the nose!

"Who'll sing of Leonidas now?
Of classic mountain passes?
'Twas General Foch who cried, I
vow:
'Behold, the gallant Gases!'

"The trachea of the foe is ours,
By Kultur paralyzed;
Let History acclaim its powers—
The world anhydridized!

"The Landsturm of Chlorine will
make
Bronchitis our ally;
The Landwehr of Formol will
shake
The Enemy's brains awry.

"Brave Nausea, Your Majesty,
And ruthless Hemoptysis,
Climbed our certain victory—
They brought us through the
crisis.

"O, Sire, to Colonel *Mal du coeur*,
The foe owes dreadful loss;
Reward him, Sire, for his *sans
peur*;
Give him the Iron Cross.

"Who would have thought that
Germany
Possessed a Chief so artful?
That Bromin's simple strategy
Would give us such a heartfelt?

"Tis potent General Bromin, Sire,
Who points the obvious moral,
Who may justly now aspire
To Hindenburgian Laurel."

The Kaiser frowns. Can it be true
That William's not aged mel-
lower?
That Bromin's triumph turns him
blue,
While envy makes him yellower?

At length he answers: "I command.
I'm Overlord of Gases,
Emperor of Bromin and—
Of Sulphur and Molasses.

"Bring twenty tailors, let them
swarm;
Of warlike cloths a sheaf;
I wish a fitting uniform
Of Gasochemist-in-Chief.

"The harbor holds my ships of
war,
My Gases hold the air;
With Odors wafted near and far
I'll win, with Smells to spare.

"Come, I would view that field of
Smells,
Where writhes the foe that
shoots
At us with antiquated shells—
Here, Kessner! Quick! My
boots!

"My horse! That Scrap of Paper,
too—
'Convention of The Hague,'
I'll scan its noble lines anew
Where we produced a Plague!"

Thus speaks the Teuton Emperor,
William the Mephitic,
King of Prussia, Lord of War,
Of Ethics beatific!

O France! Thy memories are
large
With courteous combats,
With warnings: "We're about to
charge—
Be careful of your hats!"

A thousand lace-trimmed cuffs
arose
In soldierly salute—
Where palms now guard each
threatened nose
Where rides the Prussian Brute.

"We're about to charge,"—so he
might say;
"Adjust your respirators!"
Alas! he's not inclined that way—
To Gases we are traitors!

He's Poison-doomed. All must
concede it,
Hovel-born, or palace;
His legend's changed. We now
must read it:
"Deutschland Unter Alles!"



The Protective Uniform Worn by the German Soldiers While Discharging Poisonous Gases Upon the French and English Soldiers. Sketched by A. Forestier.

THE poisonous gas war which was started by the Germans in a surprise attack on the British at Ypres, continues to be the subject of excited comment not only among all the belligerent nations but in all countries that are considering the possibilities of future war.

The allies naturally accuse the Germans of brutality and treachery in employing this new and surprising method of war. The French poet, Edmond Rostand, the most distinguished man of letters in France, has best expressed the feeling of the allies in a remarkable poem, in which he has poured all the sarcasm and satire he could command upon the Germans for their use of poisonous gases.

This composition, which is printed above, is considered by far the most original of the many poems that Rostand has published on war subjects.

It is charged that the Germans are violating a provision of The Hague Convention, to which they subscribed, by using poisonous gases. They reply that the French had already used such gases and that Ypres was a triumph for German chemistry. Lord Kitchener has now announced that the British will use similar gases in retaliation upon the Germans.

The reason for prohibiting poison gases is that they are excessively cruel, and destroy the health of the sufferer, even if he recovers. The interesting letters printed on this page, written by soldiers at the front who have suffered from the gases or seen their effects, appear to prove that these new terrors of war cause hopeless invalidism when inhaled in any quantity.

Many people will certainly wonder whether it is more inhuman to kill men with poisonous gases than to mangle them with shells and shrapnel. As most of the provisions of The Hague Convention have been thrown to the winds, is it not more logical that every country should prepare to use new and terrible weapons effectively? It certainly adds to the cruelties of war, but that has not unusually been an objection to the introduction of a new weapon.

First Hand Descriptions of How the Cruel War Gases Kill and Torture

By Sergeant James A. Greenwood, of the Lancashire Fusiliers.

TOWARD evening we were sitting down, looking quietly in the British trenches before Ypres, for the fighting had been slow.

I looked up from my newspaper and saw a long, thick cloud of greenish color outlined against the sky in the direction of the German positions on the other side of the Canal. At first I thought it was a storm cloud, but my knowledge of weather quickly told me that no natural cloud hung so low.

There was a strong wind blowing towards us and the yellow cloud was upon us in a few seconds. I called to the men in our trench to stand to their arms and climbed out of the rear of the trench and mounted a little hillock to see what was the matter. It was to this that I owed my escape from death, for hundreds of our men were suffocated where they lay in the trenches without having any idea that a new and horrible form of attack was being made on them.

From what I had breathed of the fumes I suffered horribly. It was as if vitriol had been poured first into my throat and then into my lungs and into every corner of my body. Every attempt to breathe increased my sufferings and seemed to drive the fiery poison deeper into my tissues. I was blinded by the acid gas. Every man who retained his consciousness started to rush back to the rear, for no one could stand against this devilish, intangible enemy.

We had gone hundreds of yards to the rear of our first line trenches before the stern commands of the higher officers brought us to a temporary stand. The gas had then been somewhat weakened and dissipated. The Germans came on through it, with their faces completely covered with masks and respirators, making them inhuman objects, but many of them succumbed to their own fumes as we afterwards found. They bayoneted our unconscious men as they passed over their trenches and came on till they were checked by our men beyond the deadly gas zone.

While we staggered under the poisoned wind, gas bombs burst over our heads with a roar and blaze as if the sun had fallen on us. I woke up in hospital a mid a scene that made me think I had been sent below.

Creatures with greenish-black faces and horribly red, protruding eyes lay all round, groaning and shrieking horribly. Others were already dead.

The pain they suffered must have been dreadful, for I had received a smaller quantity than most of them and my own sufferings were horrible. The poison eats up the lungs and throat, and even the few who recover after swallowing the gas must be helpless invalids the rest of their lives. The doctor tells me that I shall get well, but I feel that I shall never be well again. All our men say that they would gladly meet sure death by a bullet rather than swallow this gas.

By Thomas L. Wells, of the Fourteenth Canadian Battalion.

HAVING escaped by a miracle from death by the German poison gas, and having seen hundreds of my comrades dead and dying in untold agonies, I am able to send you some personal experiences about this fiendish surprise.

The Germans have employed poison gases in at least four different forms. They have liberated vast clouds of gas from tanks placed in their trenches, they have sent out gases from portable containers carried by their men, they have sprinkled the ground before their trenches with a liquid which, when ignited, gives rise to a poisonous gas and they have fired poison bombs at us from mortars. The gas driven upon us in large quantities at Ypres and other places is believed to have been chlorine. While among the other gases used with deadly effect one of the most terrible was bromine.

For these reasons some confusion has been caused by reports from the front. Some of our men have seen yellow clouds, others black, while others have come in contact with German soldiers spraying gas from portable containers.

The first knowledge I had of the danger was when I saw some of our Canadian soldiers on lower ground holding their hands to their noses and then writhing in agony. We saw a fog rise from the ground, not yellow, but greenish, with a sheen like that of a soap bubble. It came with the wind, and the men it touched immediately began to claw the ground like maniacs.

The men I saw were a greenish gray with a most peculiar shiny appearance of the skin, which was tight stretched. Hands, neck and arms were covered with the indelible stains. They were horrible, writhing caricatures of humanity. Trees, bushes, even the earth itself, were stained and turned into a hideous mockery of nature by the gas.

After learning how our front ranks had suffered our commanders ordered a hasty retreat. In this way the Germans, advancing over the bodies of our suffocated companions, bayoneted and stamping on the dying as they came, secured an important advance.

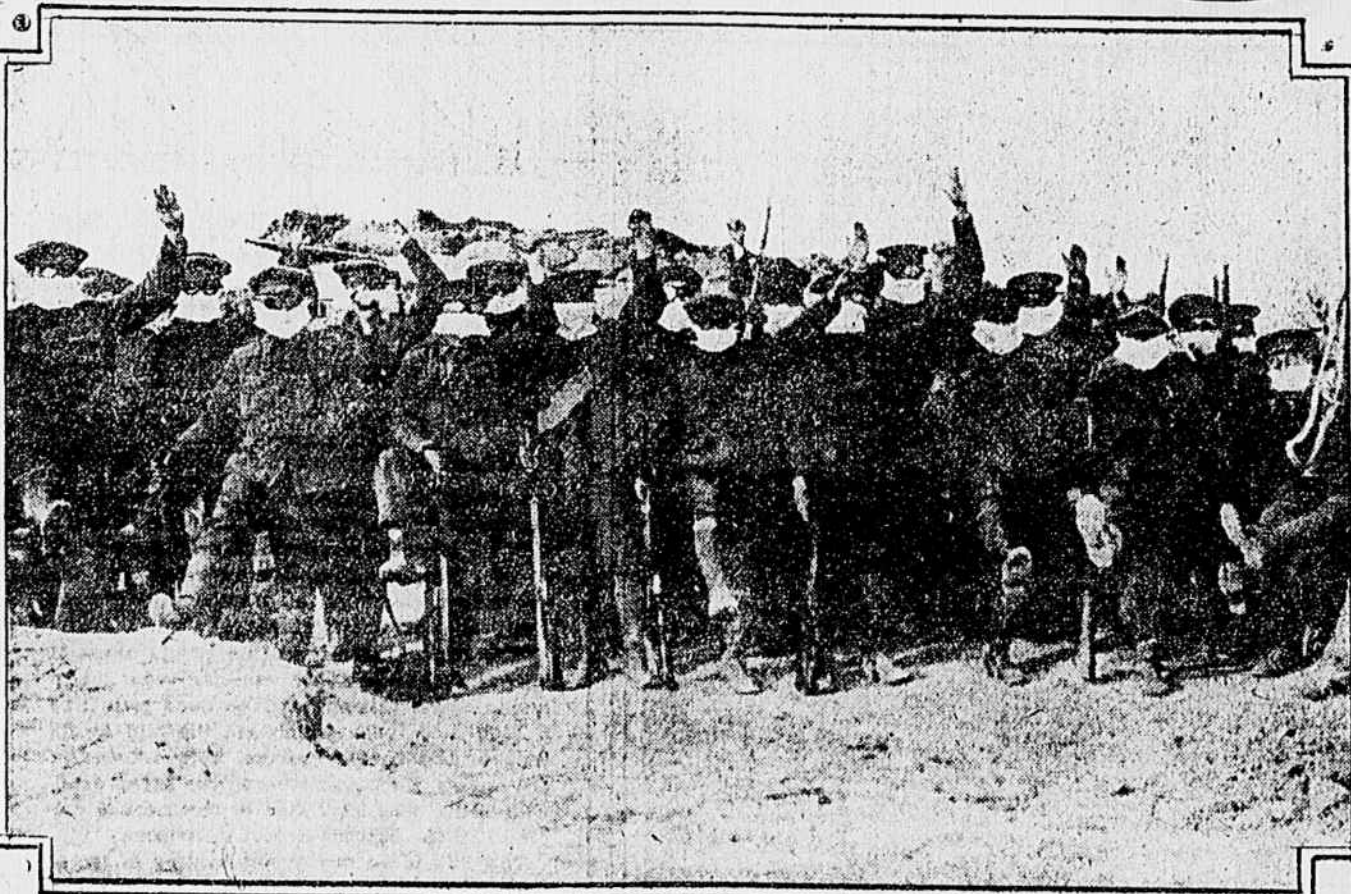
Type of Respirator Used by the British in the Trenches to Protect Themselves in the Trenches Against Gases. Air-valve Is Shown on Top. (and Below)

English Soldiers in the Trenches Wearing Goggles and



Photo by PAUL THOMPSON

Handkerchiefs as Protection Against Noxious Fumes.



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A Stream of Bromine Vapor Being Formed from a Bottle, Showing How the Heavy Gas Falls, as It Does from a Trench Crest Before Being Blown Toward the Enemy.

By Colonel Sir Wilmot Herringham. Consulting Physician With the British Army. I HAS been my painful duty to witness the effect of the poisonous gases employed by Germans, and so appalling are they that I wish I could make known this infamy throughout the civilized universe. As an army surgeon, I have had to face many duties that have shocked the roughest natures, but I declare on my honor that never, in the course of my experiences in savage warfare, with the tribes of the Sudan, Ashanti and Northern India, have I met with cases of inhuman torture to equal this poisonous gas procedure of the Germans. The spectacle presented by those afflicted has made the blood of all onlookers boil, and to me, who have had many friends in the German nation—soldiers and doctors—is added an intense disappointment, a feeling of shame, in realizing that a Christian community should have employed our revered sciences, medical and chemical, in perpetrating this ghastly cruelty.